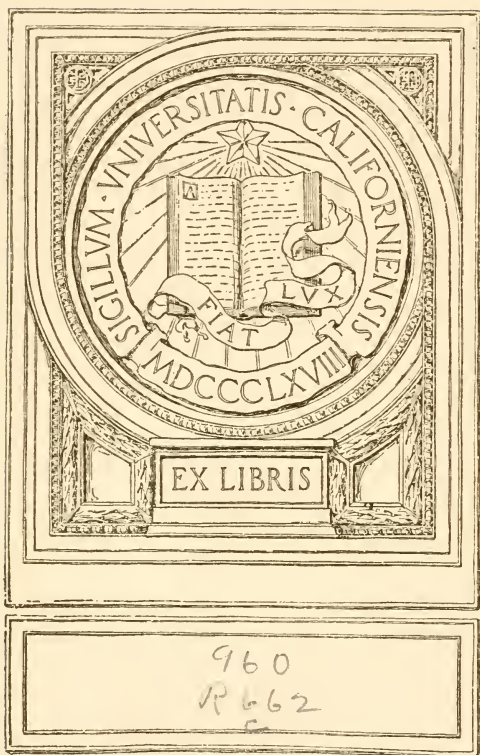


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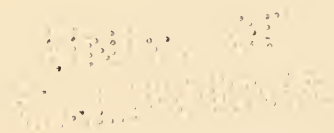




2203

THE CROSS-ROADS

THE CROSS-ROADS. A
PLAY IN A PROLOGUE
AND TWO ACTS. BY
S. L. ROBINSON



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PROLOGUE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

JAMES O'REILLY.
SIDNEY DOYLE.
HENRY BLAKE.

BRIAN CONNOR.
ELLEN MCCARTHY.

SCENE : *Committee Room at the Erin Debating Society's rooms. There is a table in the middle of the room with a bright lamp on it. A fire-place on the right and a door : on the left another door. O'Reilly is sitting on the left ; Doyle is sitting at the table smoking, and Blake, crouching over the fire, has a manuscript in his hand, which he is reading and correcting. He coughs from time to time.*

Doyle (taking out his watch). I say, it's half-past eight ! (*Gets up and opens the door on the right and looks out.*) There's not a soul there.

O'Reilly. Good Lord !

Doyle (coming back). Well, it's a fearful night ; simply pelting rain. You really couldn't expect people to come out such an evening.

O'Reilly. But it was fine enough last Monday, and there were only seven or eight. I say, Blake, you won't be able to give us your speech to-night : there's no audience.

Blake (indifferently). It doesn't matter at all.

O'Reilly. I'm afraid these debates are going to pot ; but what are we to do ?

Doyle. I don't know. It's queer, but people seem to be beginning to get tired of these speeches.

(*Innocently*) I know I take a great deal of trouble over mine.

O'Reilly. Oh, it can't be the fault of the speeches. You and Connor and I have been spouting to them for the last two years, and it stands to reason that we must have made immense progress in the art during that time. At first I used to need at least a fortnight's preparation; but now I can turn out a speech on any subject under the sun at three hours' notice.

Doyle (enviously). Yes, you're wonderfully fluent! And then there are your weekly articles in *Granuaile*. . . . I wonder would there be any chance of the editor taking any of my things?

O'Reilly (patronisingly). I don't see why he wouldn't. You write quite well. Buy up a lot of back numbers, and you'll see the sort of thing he wants.

Doyle. Y—es . . . but I know beastly little Irish—worse luck; and the *Granuaile* goes in for it so hotly.

O'Reilly. Oh, that doesn't matter. It's the sub—Browne—who's so keen on the language. I know for a fact that the editor is very shaky himself, and gets Browne to vet all his articles.

Doyle. Really! And the *Granuaile* pays you sometimes—at least, Connor got half-a-crown for a poem last week.

O'Reilly. Oh, the old *Gran's* flourishing—it must be when they pay for poetry. Poor old Connor! I'm glad to hear he's making a little money at last. I wonder why he isn't here to-night; he seldom misses a debate.

Doyle. I was in the shop to-day, and I saw him; but he was too busy attending to some people to get a word with him. He looked in a black, bad temper.

O'Reilly. Miss McCarthy had been snubbing him, I suppose.

Doyle. I didn't see her. Look here, O'Reilly why don't you get *her* to speak?

O'Reilly. Miss McCarthy?

Doyle. Yes, why not? I bet you she'd give a rattling good speech; she's clever enough for anything.

O'Reilly. Oh, she's clever— (*After a moment's thought*) Yes, that's a great idea. "Woman and the New Ireland. Speech by Miss McCarthy." It sounds fine! And of course there'd be a record attendance: half the chaps in the place are in love with her.

Doyle. I suppose she'd speak for us?

O'Reilly. Did you ever know a woman yet who would miss the chance of getting up and lecturing a roomful of men who'd be forced to give her a hearing?

Doyle (laughing). I wish she had come here to-night and we could have asked her. (*After a pause, during which he re-lights his pipe.*) Do you know, O'Reilly, that though old Fitzgibbon has been about as useless a president of the Debating Society as it is possible for a president to be, still he has done us one good turn, and that was introducing Miss McCarthy.

O'Reilly. Yes, it *is* a wonder to find a woman who is neither frumpish nor old taking an interest in patriotism and politics; and, to give her her due, I think she is genuine; she doesn't come here for the sake of—(*with a self-conscious smile*)—well, for the society she finds.

Doyle (enthusiastically). My dear fellow, she's a marvel! Can you realize that three years ago she was only Mrs. Fitzgibbon's servant; and then Fitzgibbon saw she was a cut above housemaid's

work, and brought her into the book-shop ; and now she is his most useful and intelligent assistant ! When Fitzzy brought her first to the debates, he said she was only an ignorant country girl from the wilds of County Cork, with a blind love for her country. She is one of our most intellectual members now.

O'Reilly. Oh, she's developed certainly.

Doyle. Do you know, sometimes I feel a bit afraid of her. I mean she seems so awfully superior to us. We're content to peg away year after year chatting about Ireland and what Ireland's coming to, and what Ireland might have been, and we never *do* anything. Miss McCarthy's different. I think she's beginning to get a bit sick of this eternal talk, talk, talk. She's all on for doing some definite work ; and she's just the sort of girl who would do something big for Ireland—sacrifice herself if necessary—do something *we'd* never do.

O'Reilly (slyly). Are you in love with her too ?

Doyle. Like Connor ? Oh no ; but I've an immense admiration for her—beginning life in a peasant's cottage, and after three years in Dublin being what she is to-day. What's her future ? That's the question.

Blake (who has been listening to the latter part of the conversation chimes in like an echo). That's the question.

O'Reilly (swinging round). Hallo, I didn't know you were listening. I thought you despised gossip.

Blake. I do.

O'Reilly. Well, then——

Doyle. Shut up, O'Reilly. Look here, Blake. (*To Blake.*) What do you think about Miss McCarthy ?—about her future, I mean. I say she'll be a brilliant success in some way or other—in some

practical way—that's what I admire so much about her—her practical level-headedness.

Blake (in a low voice). And that's what frightens me.

Doyle. Frightens you? (*Waits for Blake to explain himself.*) What do you mean?

Blake. Perhaps you won't understand; but I—well, she's developing one side of her nature at the expense of the other. She's not well balanced.

O'Reilly. Not well balanced! Why, she's one of the coolest-headed young women it's been my lot to meet.

Doyle. Yes, Blake. She isn't fickle and changeable; she—oh, she *is* level-headed.

Blake (quietly). But don't you think it is possible to be too level-headed, too practical, too even-minded? When I look at her, I sometimes think I see a child starving slowly to death. I see her deliberately killing one side of her nature; I—but you wouldn't understand.

Doyle (trying very hard to understand him). You—you mean that she's—that she's not sentimental and—soft?

O'Reilly (impatiently). Oh, Blake's ideal woman is a sensitive, cringing creature, all nerves and fancies.

Blake. That is not true. But I *would* like to see a little more fancy about her. She is all fact, cold fact; and some day—well, facts make a hard pillow.

O'Reilly. Pooh! She'll simply marry Connor, and be an A 1 wife and housekeeper.

Doyle. Of course Connor would like to marry her, but will she have him?

O'Reilly. You bet she will.

Doyle. It will be a long time before they can marry. Our respected president isn't exactly princely in the salaries he gives his employes.

O'Reilly (yawning). Well, all I say is, may they ask me to dinner when they're married, for I bet you'll get good grub *there*—(*listening*). What's that? I think I hear voices.

[*The door opens and Ellen McCarthy and Brian Connor enter.*]

O'Reilly (getting up quickly). Miss McCarthy! Well, you were plucky to come out such an awful night. Hello, Connor.

Ellen (shaking hands with everyone). How do you do, Mr. O'Reilly? it is a dreadful night. Good evening, Mr. Doyle. How do you do, Mr. Blake? Thanks (*to Brian, who takes her umbrella, and helps her off with her cloak*).

Ellen (coming to the fire and sitting in one of the chairs). Has no one come? Is there going to be no debate?

O'Reilly. I'm afraid not; it's such a bad evening.

Ellen. I'm so sorry, Mr. Blake, after all the trouble you went to about your speech; and this is the second Monday you've been disappointed.

Blake. Oh, it doesn't matter. I haven't much hope of converting *you*, Miss McCarthy.

Ellen (smiling). No; you'll never convert me to such a high-flown and—if you'll forgive my saying it—ridiculous idea. But still I'd like to have heard your speech.

Brian. Is this the speech we were to have had last Monday?

O'Reilly. Yes. Blake wants us to join with him in a quest for—what's the expression?—for our natural mates. Whatever we do we are not to reject that mate. All considerations of birth, or position, or suitability of the mundane kind are to be cast aside. As soon as we realize that our landlady, or the woman who washes down the stairs on a Saturday, is our natural mate——

Doyle. We marry them; and Blake says, "Bless you, my children." [*They all laugh except Blake.*]

Doyle. The weakness of the creed has always struck me as lying in the fact that there is no means of knowing if such and such a person is your natural mate or not. You may think so for six months, and get married on the strength of it; but afterwards you may realize that you have made a mistake, and then——!

Brian (half-shyly, ashamed of himself for laughing at what he secretly believes to be true). Still, Blake, I think there is something in it. I mean—I—I mean that love is the first consideration, and— and birth and station are nothing.

Ellen. Certainly. But there is a third reason for marrying besides love and personal advantage. There is marrying for a third person's sake—marrying for the advancement of some one else, the advancement of the nation, or perhaps of one's family. That to my mind might be the highest and noblest form of marriage.

Blake (horror-struck). Oh no, no. It can never be right to outrage nature. To prostitute nature for the sake of worldly advantage! Oh no, no.

Ellen (quite untouched). Oh but yes. Don't you think that there's more than a touch of selfishness in marrying for one's own love? But even granting the idea is right, is it practical? Am I to go on rejecting man after man in a search for that mysterious personage called my "mate"?

Blake. Yes; you must search and search.

Ellen. And when I meet him, how shall I recognize him?

Blake. You won't mistake him, you can't. You'll feel his whole soul, his whole being, rush out to yours and envelop you, as the wind envelops you when you stand at night on a dark hill-top;

and there will be only you and that other in the whole world.

Brian (his eyes fixed on Ellen). Yes, yes; you can't mistake it.

Doyle. No; it's quite absurd.

O'Reilly. And the idea that if you break this law a curse attaches to you is absurder still. Why, look all round you at the marriages that are undertaken from worldly motives; the results, if not absolute perfection, are at least fairly comfortable.

Brian. Well, O'Reilly, there are also countless tragedies; and perhaps if Blake's plan were followed——

Ellen. Ah, no; it's an idea that might have held good when primitive men and primitive women peopled the earth; but we've developed too much since then. Curses and all that sort of thing are hopelessly out of date.

Blake (earnestly). Miss McCarthy, I knew a man once; he was engaged—for common motives—to marry a rich, well-bred girl. One day he met his other self, his complement in the opposite sex. He recognized her at once, of course. Miss M'Carthy, she was a common girl of the streets. You would have held aside your dress for fear it might touch her; she was poor and degraded, but she was his mate, and he knew it. I begged him again and again to marry her; but he wouldn't. He was afraid of those bogies—public opinion, his family, the children that might come—he married the other girl (*stops, choked by a fit of coughing*).

Brian. Yes? And——?

Blake. She has made him a good wife—it isn't *her* fault—but his life is a hell. His mind is in torment, and his body is in torment; he is dying of a slow, incurable, internal disease. He's in hell.

[*A moment's silence.*]

Ellen. How—how horrible, Mr. Blake. But you surely don't suggest that it's a case of cause and effect?

Blake. I am quite sure. There is a curse (*rising*). Good night, Miss McCarthy. Good night, everyone. [*Goes out.*]

Ellen (thoughtfully). What a curious man he is!

Doyle. That man he was talking about—the one that's dying—is his brother.

Ellen. Oh, dear!

O'Reilly (angry with Blake for the sobering effect he has made). I'm awfully fond of old Blake; but he's a bit too—too dreary and hysterical for me.

Ellen. Yes, I like him, too. How he coughs, poor man!

Doyle. It's not a fit night for him to be out.

Ellen. And he seemed to have no coat. I'm glad he lives near; he won't take long going home.

Doyle. Won't he! Why, Miss McCarthy, as likely as not he'll spend the next couple of hours wandering about the streets and quays, wrapped in a sort of twilight dream of his own——

O'Reilly. Looking for his natural mate.

[*They all laugh except Brian.*]

Brian (to Ellen, half appealingly). Don't you really believe in it, Miss McCarthy?

Ellen. In Mr. Blake's idea? Certainly not. It's absolutely absurd. Still I'd like to have heard his speech.

O'Reilly. We'll hear it next Monday, I hope.

Ellen. But I'm afraid I won't be there to hear him.

Doyle. Why so? where are you going?

Ellen. I'm going home.

Doyle. To County Cork?

Ellen. Yes; to Ballygurteen.

O'Reilly. But not for long, I hope?

Ellen. For good. I won't come back to Dublin any more.

Doyle. Miss McCarthy!

O'Reilly. What!

Ellen (*smiling at their astonishment*). It's true.

O'Reilly. But this is very sudden; isn't it?

Brian (*crossly*). It's absolute nonsense.

Ellen. Well, you see, it's this way. Mother wrote last week saying that my sister Kate had a chance of going to learn her trade as a dressmaker with a cousin of mine, and she wanted to know would I come home and mind the house for her. Of course, it's a great chance for Kate; so I gave Mr. Fitzgibbon notice; and then his niece from England came over unexpectedly, and she'll take my place in the shop, and I can go home to-morrow.

Doyle. What a rotten shame! Couldn't your mother manage without you?

Brian. Of course she could.

Ellen. Ah, my mother's getting an old woman, and there'll have to be some one to look after the butter and the fowl.

Doyle. Why couldn't your sister stay at home?

Ellen. Well, she wants her chance the same as everyone. I've had my chance up here, and now it's only fair she should get hers.

O'Reilly. Surely you're not going back just to look after butter and hens?

Ellen. Yes, that's just what I am going to do. I'm sick of Dublin.

O'Reilly (*aghast*). Sick of Dublin!

Ellen (*smiling*). Yes; *sick* of it! You know when I came up here first, and when I began to think of things, and come to the debates and find out about Ireland, I thought Dublin was the hub of the country; I thought it was the centre of nationalism,

and that if I wanted to work for Ireland I could do the best work up here——

Brien. And so you can.

Ellen. But I've found out my mistake. The few houses that we call Ballygurteen—or even my mother's cottage—is more a centre of nationalism than Dublin, and so I'm going home.

O'Reilly (*sneering*). I see. Dark Rosaleen dairy-farming!

Ellen (*nettled*). It's better to be making butter for her sake than to be talking about her at the Erin Club. It's patriotism like yours, Mr. O'Reilly, that has given me a sickening of Dublin—your patriotism that sells American boots all the week, and comes and chats of Ireland on Monday nights.

O'Reilly. Well, I've a good tack in the Chicago boot-shop, and I don't see why I should chuck it: and at any rate I wear nothing but Irish clothes; and did you see my article in last week's *Granuaile*?

Ellen. I forgot about your little weekly articles signed with your name in Irish characters—I believe it's all the Irish you know—and as to Irish clothes, they're so smart now-a-days that they make no demand on your patriotism. Would you have worn them ten years ago?

O'Reilly. Ten years ago? Let me see, what were my views ten years ago?—— I think I was a pro-Boer.

Ellen. And eating nothing but Dutch cheese, I suppose. No, Mr. O'Reilly; I'm very glad I came up to Dublin, because I've learnt a lot here I'd never have learnt down at Ballygurteen; but a girl like me can't do anything practical up here. I'm only a farmer's daughter, after all, with the reputation at home of being able to milk the

crankiest cow in County Cork—and what good is that to me in Dublin?

Doyle. But do you expect to spend the rest of your life at home?

Brian. That's just what I say, Doyle. She's surely not going to bury herself for the rest of her life in a bog.

Doyle. It won't be long till you're sick of the country. Wait till the winter comes and the rain, and the wind blows up wet and cold, and you'll wish yourself back in Grafton Street and its bright lights. I don't believe you'll stick it long.

Ellen. Won't I? Well, I'm a country girl born and bred, and let me tell you there's a finer sight than Grafton Street, and it's the road across the hill at home; and I'd rather have the Argideen river than your old Liffey; and I'd rather see my mother's cottage standing back from the road than the finest buildings you have in Dublin.

O'Reilly. There's one for you, Doyle.

Ellen. But I don't deny I've been very happy in Dublin, and you've all been very kind to me.

O'Reilly. We're very sorry you're going, I know. Just before you came in we were saying we'd like you to give an address to the Club some Monday night.

Ellen. Me! Goodness, Mr. O'Reilly, I never did such a thing in my life!

Doyle. Then, the sooner you begin the better.

Brian. You'd do it splendidly!

Ellen (laughing). Not I. I think it's high time I left Dublin if that's what you're going to make me do.

Doyle. What will you do when you go home?

Ellen. Oh, I'll be busy enough with the hens and the dairy, and—and—oh, there's a lot of work on a farm.

Brian (angrily). It's absurd to think of you going back to farm-work.

Ellen. Indeed, it isn't. It's now that I'll be able to make use of all I learnt at the debates. I'll be able to *do* something at home.

Brian. You could do better work up here.

O'Reilly. Whatever you do, I'm sure you'll never forget that we are all pledged to serve Ireland as best we can in our different spheres of work. Perhaps you *will* have great opportunities at home, Miss McCarthy—better opportunities than you'd have had if you stayed in Dublin.

Ellen. Yes, that's what I think. Would you mind telling me the time, Brian?

Brian (looking at his watch). It's not nine yet.

Ellen. I think I'd better be going all the same. I've a lot of packing to do; and I only looked in to say good-bye to any friends who might happen to be here. [*Rising, and putting on her cloak.*]

Doyle. Are you really going to-morrow?

Ellen. Yes, by the first train.

O'Reilly. What will Mr. Fitzgibbon do without you?

Ellen. Indeed, he was very good to me—letting me come to these debates, and lending me books—and Mrs. Fitzgibbon, too. I'm very grateful to them.

O'Reilly. I'll tell you what, Miss McCarthy, you should start a debating society at Ballygurteen, and get down speakers from Dublin, and have a great opening meeting.

Ellen (laughing). Indeed, we're much too busy down in the country to be having meetings and speeches; but I mean to make use of all the education I got up in Dublin; and maybe Ballygurteen will be known all over Ireland yet for its up-to-date farming.

O'Reilly. I hope it will, indeed. You must write to us sometimes, and tell us how you get on ; and if there is any way we can help you—well, you've only got to ask, you know.

Ellen. Thank you very much. Are you coming, Brian, or do you want to stay and have a talk ?

Brian (quickly). Oh, I'm coming, of course.

O'Reilly. We'll see you to the door, anyway (*opening the door on the left*). Take the lamp, Doyle ; the gas has been put out.

[Doyle takes the lamp off the table and goes to the door. Ellen follows, but stops in the middle of the room.]

Ellen (looking round, and speaking with a touch of wistful regret in her voice). We've had many a pleasant talk here ; haven't we, Mr. O'Reilly ? I wonder will I ever see this little room again. Yes, I'm coming, Mr. Doyle. *[Exit all.]*

CURTAIN.

ACT I

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ELLEN MCCARTHY.

MRS. MCCARTHY, *her mother.*

MRS. DESMOND.

MIKE DEMPSEY.

TOM DEMPSEY, *his son.*

BRIAN CONNOR.

EIGHT MONTHS LATER: *Interior of Mrs. McCarthy's cottage. Fire-place on the left, and door leading to the yard. At the back a dresser, and at the right-hand corner a door leading to the road. A table in the middle of the room, at which an old woman—Mrs. McCarthy—is ironing. Another old woman—Mrs. Desmond—sits by the fire with a cup of tea in her hand.*

Mrs. Desmond. An' so you've Ellen back?

Mrs. McCarthy (pausing in her work). Didn't I see you since she came home? Oh, you're right. You were away all the summer an' autumn with your daughter. Yes; Kate's gone to the dress-maker, an' Ellen's come home in her place.

Mrs. Desmond. You're lucky, ma'am, to have another one to come home. Since my Mary's went, I have no one to do a hand's turn for me—not that himself isn't very obliging; but—but—

Mrs. McCarthy (with mild scorn). A man isn't much good in a house, anyway.

Mrs. Desmond. Sorra a bit of good at all. 'Tis well for you to have Ellen, a fine gerr'l an' a great scholar, too; for I remember well the letters you used to be reading to me that she wrote home from Dublin, an' never in me life did I see such long letters.

Mrs. McCarthy. Long! You may say that! 'Tis many the day I was tired before I had them all spelt out; an' sure I didn't understand the half she was saying, about the meetings she was going to, an' the talk they had, an' about Ireland—as I says to Ellen herself when she came home, "What do I know about Ireland?" But seemingly they talk a lot about Ireland up in Dublin.

Mrs. Desmond. She was glad to come home?

Mrs. McCarthy. She was so. An' 'tisn't every gerr'l that's spent three years in the city is glad to come back here, I tell you. But Ellen wasn't a minute in the house when she tossed off her hat an' her grand clothes, an' away with her feeding the hens.

Mrs. Desmond. Well, well.

Mrs. McCarthy. An' on Sunday, I'd have taken me oath she'd be for showing the gerr'ls some of the fine Dublin fashions—taking the shine out of Maggie Culinane that thinks such a dale of herself—but nothing would do her but to put on me old cloak that I've had these fifteen years. "Wisha, Ellen," says I, "you're never going to wear that?" "I am indeed," says she. "When I was in Dublin, I wore Dublin clothes; but I'm in the county of Cork now, an' 'tisn't apeing the city I'll be"—an' off with her to the chapel.

Mrs. Desmond. Look at that now! Well, isn't it nice to have her come back the same as she was before—no fine notions at all?

Mrs. McCarthy (discontentedly). Ah, she's not altogether the same. You've no idea now the way she goes on about claneness. It beats me altogether. There's not another one ever said this room wasn't clane, but the morning after she came, she was down on her two knees scrubbing an' dusting, an'—an'—(trying to keep back her

laughter) she persuaded me to put the hens into wire cages the way they wouldn't come into the house.

Mrs. Desmond. Glory be to Goodness! Sure I thought the place felt strange an' lonely. An' who ever heard tell of hens in cages?

Mrs. McCarthy (laughing). 'Tis the newest thing, I'm told, an' she persuaded a lot of the neighbours to do the same, an' to feed them different, an' to do all sorts of queer things.

Mrs. Desmond (scornfully). I don't hold with them new notions at all.

Mrs. McCarthy. Well, I'm not denying her hens are laying in a fright—for the winter time. Eight dozen eggs she had last week; an' with the price they are now——

Mrs. Desmond (thunder-struck). Eight dozen! Do you tell me? An' I haven't one at all! Eight dozen! Still now, I wonder is it *right* for hens to be laying that way so early in the year?

Mrs. McCarthy (calmly). I don't mind whether it's right for the hens or not. The money's very handy anyhow. But she did pick up a lot of queer notions in Dublin. She wasn't here a week before she got a bath out from Bandon, an' she keeps it up in her room.

Mrs. Desmond (uncertainly). A bath?

Mrs. McCarthy. Yes, a thing you do be washing yourself in.

Mrs. Desmond. I know. I've seen them. An' what for would'n't a basin do you?

Mrs. McCarthy. A basin wouldn't suit her at all. The place she was in in Dublin they had a room specially for baths an' nothing else. A bath-room she called it.

Mrs. Desmond (in amazement). What sort are the Dublin people at all! (*getting up and putting*

her empty cup on the dresser, and drawing her chair a little nearer to the table). An' now, what about this match you've made up for her?

Mrs. McCarthy (with disgust). Don't talk to me!

Mrs. Desmond. Indeed I heard he was after Julia Nyhan.

Mrs. McCarthy (with venom). Much good may he have with her, say I. An' idle, trapsing streel of a gerr'l —

Mrs. Desmond. She's all that. An' isn't it a queer thing he'd choose her instead of Ellen, as fine a —

Mrs. McCarthy (putting away her ironing, and setting the table for tea). Ah sure, what does Tom Dempsey mind about fineness an' good looks? The gerr'l with the most money is the gerr'l for him, an' old Nyhan would give more money than Tom Dempsey is asking to get Julia out of the house.

Mrs. Desmond. Oh my!

Mrs. McCarthy. There's a great deal in a fortune, Mrs. Desmond, but there's not everything. An', mind me, a good, capable, managing wife is better than twenty pounds, which is the difference between what old Nyhan is giving an' what I can afford. A good wife is the making of many a man.

Mrs. Desmond. That's true.

Mrs. McCarthy. Look at Patrick Deasy. I remember him a common labourer; an' then he married Ann Carty, an' she never rested till she got him a place with her brother as mason; an' before she died he was in business for himself. Then after he married my cousin over at Myross; she brought him to Skibbereen, an' made him set up there, an' got him custom among her relations;

an' since she died an' he married Katie West—sure he's a tremendous great man with a farm outside Skibbereen, an' horses, an' traps!

Mrs. Desmond. Ay indeed; he riz be wives, sure enough.

Mrs. McCarthy. Well, that's what I'm saying. Ellen's a great manager, an' in a year she'd save more than twenty pounds. But Tom an' his old father are all for the money; an' if there's a bargain between this an' hell, Mike Dempsey's the one to have it. Why wouldn't he? sure that's his business.

Mrs. Desmond. 'Tis a pity, now, an' Knockrobin farm such good land an' all.

Mrs. McCarthy (haughtily). I'm sure Ellen won't be waiting long. For all that Tom's a good match, Ellen's a good one too. There's letters an' photographs coming every day of the week from young men in Dublin. I tell you the man that gets her is lucky.

Mrs. Desmond (apologetically). 'Tis quite true, 'tis quite true; I meant no offence, ma'am. Only seeing the way the country is, young women as plentiful as blackberries, an' marriageable farmers *terrible* scarce, I was thinkin' it was a pity for Ellen to have missed the chance of Tom Dempsey.

Mrs. McCarthy. Oh, I'm not denying I'd like to see her married to him. I'm a poor widdy woman, an' if I died in me bed to-morrow, Ellen would be all alone in the world. But faith, it's not altogether settled yet. Mike Dempsey went down the road to Ballygurteen a while ago, an' I'm going to step down an' meet him coming back; he might have changed his mind since last Sunday.

Mrs. Desmond. I must go down, too, for a bit of fat bacon for himself; and I'd better be going now,

for Johnny isn't too well pleased if I have his tea late.

Mrs. McCarthy. Come on so; we'll go down together.

[*Gets her shawl and puts it on. A knock is heard at the door.*]

Mrs. McCarthy. What's that?

Mrs. Desmond. 'Tis someone at the door, ma'am.
[*Opens the door.*]

Brian Connor (outside). Is Miss McCarthy in?

Mrs. McCarthy (coming to the door). Is it Ellen McCarthy, you mean?

Brian. Yes, Miss Ellen McCarthy. Does she live here?

Mrs. McCarthy. She does, sir; but she's out at present. She went down to the village. Would you step inside and sit down?

Brian. Er—thank you (*enters*). Will she be very long, do you think?

Mrs. McCarthy. She won't; she'll be in any minute.

Mrs. Desmond (looking out of the door). Sure here she is up the road!

Brian. What! Where? (*hurries to the door*). Yes, indeed. [*Enter Ellen rather out of breath.*]

Ellen (shaking hands with Brian). How are you? I've been behind you all the way up the road, and you never saw me! I walked as fast as ever I could, so as I'd overtake you, but you beat me in the end.

Brian. I never saw you. How are you, Ellen?

Ellen. Oh, I'm grand. Wouldn't you sit down, Brian? Have you a cup of tea for us, mother?

Mrs. McCarthy. There's some in the teapot, an' get out that fresh cake you made. I must be off, for I want to catch Mike Dempsey on the road. Wouldn't you sit nearer the fire, sir?

Brian. Oh no, thank you. I'm quite warm.

Mrs. McCarthy. Well, I'll be off. Good evening, sir.

Brian. Good evening, Mrs. McCarthy.

[*Exit Mrs. McCarthy and Mrs. Desmond.*]

Ellen (*getting a fresh soda-cake and cutting it, and sitting down at the table and pouring out two cups of tea*). Well now, Brian, tell me all about yourself and your doings in Dublin. How are they all at the Debating Club? Mr. Doyle sent me his photo last week, a very good likeness: did you see it?

Brian. Oh yes, but—but—a bit flattering, didn't you think? However, don't let's bother about Doyle; I want to hear how you're getting on. How do you like Ballygurteen after the city?

Ellen. I like it very much. Of course a lot of things seemed queer when I came home—the house seemed so small, and—and—oh! all the ways are different from town ways; but I've got into them now, and I wouldn't go back to Dublin for a fortune.

Brian (*dismally*). Wouldn't you?

Ellen (*cheerfully*). Not I. It's so lonely in a town, not knowing one-half—no, nor a quarter—of the people you meet; and sure, I know every living soul round here.

Brian. Yes, of course, I understand that. But don't you ever miss—miss the Monday debates and—and all your Dublin friends?

Ellen. Well, to tell you the truth, I've been too busy since I came home to feel lonely. I'm working hard for Ireland, Brian, as I said I would. We had a woman down lecturing on poultry just after I came home, and a lot of the farmers' wives went to hear her. But sure, what's the use of their

going and listening if they never *do* anything? So after the instructor had gone away I went round the country persuading the people to do what she had said.

Brian. And of course it wasn't a bit of good.

Ellen. Wasn't it, though? There was never such an amount of eggs in Ballygurteen in the winter time before; in fact (*less cheerfully*), the price fell; so I'm trying to get private customers now in Dublin and England.

Brian. (*impatient at this recital of petty triumph*). Oh, yes; of course, that's very satisfactory and—and—encouraging. But really, Ellen, you're a cut above that—you're wasted here—in this cottage—feeding miserable pigs and poultry.

Ellen (*laughing*). Don't say a word against the pigs! Never did we have such fine bonhams.

Brian. That's just what I say. Anything you put your hand to succeeds. But there's better work to be done than (*scornfully*) making a lot of bally hens lay eggs and rearing—what do you call them?

Ellen. Maybe there is better work for me to do, and I'm not denying I've bigger ideas than doing that. (*Quietly*) I'm very disappointed to-day, Brian, for there was a fine match nearly made up for me, and it's all off now, bad luck to it.

Brian (*in dismay*). A match, Ellen? A—a marriage, do you mean? Why, who is it?

Ellen. 'Tis a very strong farmer about two miles west of this, with a fine farm and a comfortable house. He's been looking for a wife this good bit, and he pitched on me in the latter end. I was delighted, you may be sure; for he's a great match, and the land's good; but now he's all for marrying another girl with a bigger fortune than my own.

Brian (*crushing down his jealousy and speaking*

with immense tenderness). And do you love him very much?

Ellen (looking at him in surprise). What! (*Laughing lightly*.) Ah, sure, I remember your grand notions, and all the books and novels you used to be lending me. But don't you know that we take no count of that down in the country? 'Tis according to the fortune you have you marry—not falling in love.

Brian (horror-struck). Good God! Ellen! how horrible! what a hell such a marriage must be!

Ellen. Hell, is it? No; but I'd like to see any marriages turn out better. Those love-marriages in the books you lent me weren't much to boast of, I'm sure. Fighting, and quarrelling, and going away from each other!

Brian (utterly flabbergasted). But Ellen, a marriage without love!

Ellen. In all the parish I only know one marriage for love, where a farmer married a labourer's daughter without a penny; and—

Brian. Ah! *that* was the right spirit.

Ellen (quietly). And he beats her up and down the roads on a Saturday night something disgraceful.

Brian (blankly). Oh!

Ellen (smiling). So you see, Brian, I haven't much of an opinion of love-marriages. However, I don't think there's any chance of my marrying this man.

Brian (more cheerfully). I'm glad of that. For I—well, look here; I've—I've—had a stroke of luck; I've got a sort of secretaryship.

Ellen. Oh, Brian, I am glad! Sure, I always said you'd get on.

Brian. Oh, it's nothing so awfully wonderful; but it's worth a hundred a year, and that in

addition to my stray earnings, will bring my total up to about one hundred and fifty; and—and—

Ellen. It's fine. And is it in Dublin?

Brian. Oh, yes; and—and Ellen, I came down from Dublin to know if you would marry me.

Ellen (starting up). Marry you!

Brian (rising). I don't think this can be quite a surprise to you. Ellen, I love you. Can't you? can't you?—

[Lays his hand on her arm; but she breaks away from him and goes towards the fire.]

Ellen. Oh, Brian!

Brian (anxiously). You do care for me a little, don't you?

Ellen. Oh, yes, I like you. I—but oh! it's so different.

Brian. How different? Did I speak too suddenly, dear?

Ellen. No; but thinking I'd be going to marry this farmer, and planning what I'd do, and—(*passes her hand over her forehead in perplexity*).

Brian. You're too good to be a farmer's wife, Ellen. Come back to Dublin with me; we will get a nice little house somewhere in the suburbs—

Ellen (coldly). You'd soon be sorry you married me. I'm only a country girl, and you're a gentleman.

Brian. What nonsense! Do you doubt me?

Ellen. No, no; but—I'm not cut out for that sort of life. I'd made up my mind to be a farmer's wife, and to make use of all the education I got up in Dublin. Do you remember that man that used to be lecturing about Ireland being at the cross-roads, and how it was the duty of each one of us to help her along the right road? Well, I thought

there was a great chance now of my helping her down here. I thought maybe I'd get all the farmers to join in a kind of society to send their butter and eggs and fowl away where there'd be a better price, and to get instructors down about the cattle and crops. And, then, if I was married to this farmer—he has a good farm, but he's an old-fashioned sort of man, who does just what his father and his grandfather did before him (*getting more and more enthusiastic*)—and wouldn't it be a fine thing for me to make him manage it in the most up-to-date way, make him feed the cattle as the instructors say they *should* be fed—and all that sort of thing? Wouldn't that be helping Ireland a bit along the right road?

Brian. Yes, of course; but—

Ellen (regretfully). But that's all off now. Julia Nyhan will make a queer hand of the farm.

Brian. But you could work for Ireland up in Dublin.

Ellen. What could I do? Only go down and talk at the club on Monday nights. (*She suddenly turns to Brian eagerly*). Is the secretaryship connected with Ireland?

Brian (embarrassed). Well—er—no. To tell you the truth, it's connected with an English firm. But as you say—we could go to the club every week—and—(*desperately trying to recollect the outward and visible signs of his patriotism*)—and—wear Irish clothes.

Ellen (smiling). You're a great patriot, Brian. (*Hastily.*) Of course you're right to take the chance of business when it was offered to you; but I—I don't know what to think.

Brian. Do, do, come with me. You'd never regret it; I swear you wouldn't: say you'll marry me, do!

Ellen. I don't know. I feel as if—as if I had a duty down here.

Brian. Duty be hanged! A lot of cloddish farmers! Think of yourself, Ellen, and don't mind your duty.

Ellen (speaking half to herself). It would have been a great life to have been over Knockrobin farm. A great dairy I'd have had, and got that waste land drained. A great farm it would be in a year, and in any other farm the same way.

Brian. You'd soon get sick of it. You'd soon feel the pettiness of such an existence. Don't you feel the difference since you came down between this cottage and Dublin? There's better work for you to do than managing a farm.

Ellen. It's the only sort of work I'm fitted for. I'm only a rough country girl.

Brian. Rubbish! Why, you were one of our best debaters in Dublin. Believe me, you'll find more opportunities of serving Ireland as my wife than vegetating down here (*coming over and laying his hand on her arm, which she makes no attempt to remove, and speaking with all the tenderness he can*). And then Ellen, do you put patriotism and politics before your love for me? [*A pause.*]

Ellen. I'll tell you what, Brian. I won't give you any answer for a week or two. I must think things out a bit. It means such a different life for me if I go back to Dublin with you. Will you let me think it over?

Brian. I suppose I must. But, Ellen——

Ellen. Hush! I hear my mother coming up, and there's a man's voice, too. I don't want to meet people for a minute or two. Come out and look at the hens, and I'll show you what bonhams are! [*Laughing, and going out the door on the left.*]

Brian follows.

[*Mrs. McCarthy and an old farmer, Mike Dempsey, enter by the other door.*

Mrs. McCarthy (looking round the room in search of Ellen, and speaking in a loud, cheerful voice). Come in, come in, Mr. Dempsey, and sit yourself down near the fire. Ah, where's Ellen at all, I wonder? She was here a minute ago before I went out.

Mike Dempsey. I'd like to see her, and tell her the good news meself.

Mrs. McCarthy (pouring out a cup of tea). Yes, then, it is good news, an' 'tis Ellen will be delighted. Sure she'll be in in a minute. She'll be here before Tom comes anyhow. (*Goes over to Mike with a cup of tea*). Take that now, Mr. Dempsey, and wish good luck to the pair of them.

Mike Dempsey (looking into the cup, but making no effort to take it). 'Tisn't altogether lucky, I've heard, to be drinking health in tay.

Mrs. McCarthy (laughing, and going to the dresser). Oh, then, you're the man knows what he wants (*measures some whiskey into a glass and waters it*). Here you are (*hands him the glass*).

Mike Dempsey. Ah, that's the stuff. Here's luck to the pair of them (*drinks*).

Mrs. McCarthy (*sitting down contentedly at the table*). Well, there's one thing I know, and that is, you'll never regret this day's work, Mike. A good manager is money in a house.

Mike Dempsey (regretfully). Still, twenty pounds is twenty pounds.

Mrs. McCarthy. Maybe so; but Julia Nyhan is a born scatterer. Ellen knows how to spend a shilling to advantage, I tell you.

Mike Dempsey. 'Twould be better business, ma'am, if she knew how to save it.

Mrs. McCarthy. Ah, she can save, too (*drinking*

her tea). They must be married before Shrove, of course.

Mike Dempsey. An' as soon as 'twould be convenient for the money, ma'am, Tom would like to have it. There's plenty of uses for money coming on the spring.

Mrs. McCarthy. Oh, you'll get it all in good time. Ellen's not married yet.

Mike Dempsey. Still an' all, Tom won't go back on his word——

Mrs. McCarthy (emphatically). Bedad he won't. I'll see about that. An' is it true, Mike, that you're not going to live on at Knockrobin after Tom gets married?

Mike Dempsey. 'Tis quite true.

Mrs. McCarthy. An' what are you going to do? You're a very old man to be turning out.

Mike Dempsey. I'm going to live in the little cottage on the Caragh road—an' apply for an Old Age Pension.

Mrs. McCarthy. God Almighty, man! what do you want with an Old Age Pension?

Mike Dempsey. Why wouldn't I get it as well as another?

Mrs. McCarthy. An' you with a big farm?

Mike Dempsey (slyly). Ah, I made over the farm to Tom; and I've nothing to live on only two shillings a week he lets me have.

Mrs. McCarthy. Faith! you're making mighty sure you'll get it.

Mike Dempsey (triumphantly). Well, 'twould be a queer thing if I wouldn't get it, with two of me nephews on the Old Age Pension Committee.

Mrs. McCarthy (laughing). Oh, then, Mike, 'tis you're the clever lad! You'd cheat the saints above, let alone the Government.

[*Enter Ellen and Brian.*

Mrs. McCarthy (excitedly). 'Tis all settled, Ellen. Tom was down at Nyhan's to-day, an' he got a taste of me brave Julia's temper—an' you're to marry him before Shrove.

Ellen (bewildered). What, what?

Mike Dempsey. 'Tis quite true. Tom's coming up to spake to you himself. "Damn her twenty pounds," says he. "Julia's got a temper an' a half, an' I'm glad I found it out before it was too late."

Brian (in a low, beseeching voice). Ellen!

Mrs. McCarthy. An' only a while ago I was saying to Mrs. Desmond that it was all off. Can't you say something to Mike Dempsey, Ellen?

Mike Dempsey. She's keeping all her fine speeches for Tom!

Ellen. Oh no, but I got a start when you told me. This is very good news, Mike; and I'm sure I hope I'll make Tom a good wife.

Mike Dempsey. You will so. We'll risk the twenty pounds.

Brian (in a low voice). You don't mean this, Ellen?

Ellen. I do, Brian. Be quiet now; I'll explain afterwards. (*To her mother.*) Did you say Tom was coming up?

Mrs. McCarthy. Yes, he'll be here in a minute or two; he was down in the village. (*To Brian.*) I beg your pardon, sir, wouldn't you sit down? (*Drawing out a chair from the table.*) We're in such a state over Ellen, you must excuse us.

Brian (angrily). Indeed, I can't congratulate you, Mrs. McCarthy. Ellen is a bit too good to be a——

Ellen (in dismay). Be quiet, Brian. Please, please, be quiet.

Brian. I won't. I——

Ellen. Be quiet, I tell you.

Mike Dempsey (coming over). Here, what's the matter at all?

Brian. I ——

Ellen (desperately). Would you mind going outside, mother, for a minute? I want to have a word with Mr. Connor before Tom comes.

Mrs. McCarthy (wondering). To be sure, why wouldn't you spake to him, an' how would we prevent you? Come on, Mr. Dempsey, an' we'll walk down the road a bit to meet Tom.

Ellen. Yes, do. And tell him I'll be out to him in a minute.

Mrs. McCarthy (to Mike). Come on, so.

[*Goes out.*]

Mike Dempsey (following her unwillingly and looking with scorn at Brian as he passes him). Well, well, I wonder what's the country coming to at all?

Brian (passionately). It's wicked, it's criminal, Ellen; I won't stand it; you mustn't do it.

Ellen (quietly). I've made up my mind, Brian.

Brian. Bought and sold as if you were—a cow! Have you no self-respect? Why do you allow it?

Ellen. It's the way of the country.

Brian. Damn the country! Ellen, chuck this farmer fellow, and come back to Dublin with me. You like me: you said you did; and you admitted you don't care a hang about this chap. Go out now and tell him you won't marry him. Tell him ——

Ellen. Do you know what he'd do if I told him that? He'd go out and marry that steele of a Julia Nyhan.

Brian. And right, too. Like to like. That sort of a rough girl is the best wife for him.

Ellen. Ah, but think of the farm. A nice state she'd have it in in a couple of years' time. If I went and married you, that farm would go to ruination.

Brian (huffed). Oh, of course if you prefer a farm to me!

Ellen (very seriously). It's not only the farm, it's the way I was going to help the Ballygurteen people; keep the boys and girls at home, and have the place thriving and prosperous. And then Knockrobin farm—faith! if Ireland's at the cross-roads, indeed I am too this day; and 'tis hard to know which is the right road to take. If I went your road (*pauses and thinks*), well, I'm sure, Brian, I'd have a very happy, contented life. You'd be good to me, I know, and we'd pull well together. But—but 'twould be an *empty* life—at least, I think it would. And then there's this other road, where it would lead to I don't rightly know, but there'd be work and planning and success and—and—oh! it would be a great life, Brian!

Brian (very hurt by her words and with an expression of finality in his voice). It all comes to this: which do you prefer—this farmer or me?

Ellen. Oh no, Brian, there's a lot more in it than that. Of course, I like you better than Tom Dempsey, and if I'd stayed on in Dublin, I'm sure I'd have married you if you'd asked me. But now that I've the chance of being mistress of a big farm—well, it's a great opportunity.

Brian (bitterly). Of course, I might have guessed it. As soon as the man with the bigger position comes along—though he *is* only a farmer—you chuck me. I wouldn't have thought it of you, Ellen.

Ellen (sadly). You're very vexed with me now. But you know it's not for myself—only the chance of doing something—for—for Ireland—I—I— (*her voice breaks, and she sits down at the table and leans her head on her hands*).

Brian (penitently). Ellen, I'm sorry; I'm a brute,

a selfish beast. Only I'm half maddened at the thought of losing you. I'm sorry. Will you forgive me?

Ellen (sobbing a very little). Of course I will; I know you didn't mean it. I wish you'd never come down to see me—on this day of all days in the year.

Brian. I came as soon as — Are you quite decided?

Ellen (firmly). Yes.

Brian (sadly). Then I won't worry you any more. I suppose you've chosen best for Ireland, and all that sort of thing. Some day I'll be able to admire you for it; but I can't quite do that—yet.

Ellen (with real distress). Oh, Brian, I'm so sorry.

Brian. Of course you'll make a brilliant success of it—that stands to reason. You've never failed in anything yet; and you and—and that farmer—

Ellen (brightening). Yes, I hope Ballygurteen will be known all over Ireland.

Brian. And every year or so I'll drop in and see how you're getting on.

Ellen (starting up). No, you mustn't do that. You must never see me after I am married.

Brian. But, Ellen, surely you're not going to give up all your old friends just because you're married? That's absolutely ridiculous.

Ellen. No. Didn't I tell you that country marriages always turned out well? I'm not going to have you coming to see me when I'm Tom Dempsey's wife. Maybe people'd talk, and maybe they wouldn't; but I'm not going to give them the chance to talk.

Brian. What nonsense, Ellen! I wouldn't see you more than once a year.

Ellen (decidedly). Even so, it wouldn't do at all.

I'd rather not see you, Brian, (*in a lower voice*) for my own peace of mind.

Brian. Well, you must write to me.

Ellen. And the postmistress in Ballygurteen puzzling out the address on every letter !

Brian (exasperated). But, good Lord, you don't mean that I'm never to see you or hear a word about you again in this world ?

Ellen (laying her hand kindly on his shoulder). I'll tell you what, Brian, come and see me this time seven years. I'll be delighted to see you, and will make you welcome.

Brian (mournfully). Seven years is a fearful long time, Ellen.

Ellen. 'Tisn't long when you're working hard, as I'll be. [*Mrs. McCarthy appears at the door.*]

Mrs. McCarthy. Tom's outside on the road now. He doesn't like to leave the young horse, so if you'll come out an' spake to him—

Ellen. All right, mother ; I'll be out in a minute.

[*Mrs. McCarthy disappears.*]

Ellen. So now, good-bye, Brian ; and I hope you'll get on very well up in Dublin, and don't think of me at all.

Brian (miserably). I have to think of you.

Ellen. Put me right out of your head. I'll be nothing to you now—only a farmer's wife in County Cork, and you'll be a great man up in Dublin.

Brian. I declare I'd rather be a farmer in County Cork than Lord Mayor of Dublin. (*Desperately catching at a last straw of hope.*) Ellen, if I bought a farm——

Ellen (smiling). A fine farmer you'd make !

Brian. Still——

Tom Dempsey (shouting from the road). Are you comin' ?

Ellen (calling). Yes, yes. I'm coming. (*To Brian, holding out her hand*). Good-bye to you now, and come and see me if you feel inclined this time seven years : we'll have a lot to tell each other.

Brian. Good-bye, Ellen !

[*He retains her hand ; and for an instant they stand looking at each other. He, pleading with her by his look ; she, fighting his influence.*]

Ellen (tearing herself away). You'd better go out the back door and follow the path up the hill ; it will bring you out about a mile east of the station.

Tom Dempsey (outside, angrily). What the devil's keeping you ? Can't you come on out ?

Ellen (her voice breaking). Good-bye again, Brian, good-bye. (*Hurries to Tom Dempsey who is just entering.*) I'm coming, Tom, and sure it's sorry I am for keeping you. [*Pushes him from the room and follows him out.*]

Brian (looking at the empty doorway). Ellen !

CURTAIN.

ACT II

SEVEN YEARS LATER. *Interior of Tom Dempsey's cottage. On the left an open fire-place and a door leading to an inner room. At the back a window and a dresser, and at the right-hand corner a door leading to the open. A table in the middle of the room, and a litter of buckets, dishes for feeding hens, cream-separators, and milk-pans scattered about. The dresser is very bare of china; but empty medicine bottles, sheep-dip tins, and bottles of Elliman's Embrocation take the place of cups and saucers. The time is evening; and the dirty, untidy room is ill-lit by a smoky lamp. Ellen Dempsey—once Ellen McCarthy—is bending over the fire, feeding it with bits of turf. She is dressed in an old and shabby dress; and her prematurely grey hair is unkempt and dirty. While she is on her knees before the fire, her husband enters from the right, and slouches over and sits down at the table.*

Ellen. You'll have to wait a bit for your tea. I can't make any hand of the fire. I'm thinking the turf is damp. [Silence.]

Ellen (looking round, and speaking timidly). The— the sheep's going on well, I suppose?

Tom (surlily). The sheep's dead, an' her two lambs with her.

Ellen (sighing). Oh! oh! Now may God have pity on us! If only the weather would pick up a bit; but with the cold an' the snow it's no wonder the poor beasts die. *(Trying to speak more cheerfully.)* I'm thinking it's a bit warmer an' softer this evening; an' there was a little bird singing on the

bush outside when I was feeding the hens, for all the world as if it was the middle of May. There, now, it's lighting at last, but 'twill be ten minutes or more before the kettle boils. (*Rising and coming to the table.*) I'm wondering, Tom, if you went over to Kilcaskan, and asked Mike Farrell about the sheep; he's a very knowledgeable man with sheep an' lambs.

Tom (sullenly). Where's the good in dosing them?

Ellen. Ah, well, now he might have some cure for them.

Tom. No one's sheep are dying, only our own.

Ellen. An' isn't that all the more reason there *should* be a cure for ours?

Tom (darkly). There are some things there's no cure for.

Ellen. I never heard a disease in sheep there wouldn't be the cure for—unless it 'ud be the rot.

Tom. 'Tisn't the rot—I know *that*.

Ellen. Then there must be a cure for them; I'm thinking it's partly the cold weather——

Tom (breaking in roughly). If 'twas the weather, wouldn't every one's sheep be dying the same way? There's no cure for *a curse* that I ever heard tell.

Ellen. A curse! Who's talking of curses?

Tom (loudly). I am. For there's a black curse on this farm—a black, bad curse; an' where's the use in fighting a curse?

Ellen. Nonsense. What an' who would put a curse on us? It's a fine, warm farm, only the sheep get the cold up on the hill; an' if you kept them down below, as I'm saying you should, you wouldn't lose one of them.

Tom (sneering). You're a great one to advise!

Ellen (quietly). Maybe I am, an' maybe I'm not, only don't be talking of curses an' the like. Can't you——

Tom (striking the table with his fist). I will talk of curses. There is a black curse on this farm, an' it came here the day I married you, an' 'tis you yourself brought it.

Ellen (piteously). Ah sure, don't be saying that.

Tom. I will say it. For it's the truth; an' you know yourself it's the truth. Haven't you got two eyes in your head, an' can't you look round the farm an' see what it's like to-day, an' think of what it was the day you came into it seven years ago? I'll take me oath if you walked through the barony of Carbery an' back you wouldn't find a finer farm than it was that day. An' look at it now!—*(Rising and facing her).* Is it the truth I'm saying?

Ellen (shrinking). It—is.

Tom. Well, then, stop your blathering; an' if you think it's taking your advice I will, I tell you you're mistaken. *(Sitting down again.)* No, I've had enough of your advice. *[Silence.]*

Ellen (bending over the fire). Dear, dear; there's the fire out on me again. What'll I do at all at all?

Tom. Well, isn't it a queer thing for a man to come in after a long day's work, an' his wife not to be able to give him even a cup of tea? Oh, Ellen McCarthy, 'tis you're the great woman in a house, with your cookery classes an' your instructors!

Ellen. Be aisy, can't you? I'll have it lighting again in a minute. It will be all right only you had me bothered with your talk a while ago, an' I forgot to keep me eye on it. Can't you go out an' feed the calves? Your tea will be ready against you come in.

Tom. Hm! you're a great woman in a house entirely! *(Rising and getting his hat, and going to the door.)* An' listen to me; you may as well tell Maggie to go away the end of the week; for we

can't be paying away a lot of good money an' the sheep dying on us like this. I suppose you'll say you can't do the work, but I say you *must*; an' if there's few farmers' wives are without a servant — well, it's yourself an' the curse you brought are to blame.

Ellen (meekly). I'm not saying a bit, Tom. Sure I'll try an' do everything single-handed.

Tom (brutally). An' don't you be thinking you can get sick the way you did last harvest. There's hard work for you to do, an' it's you will have to do it.

[*Goes out. The fire is blazing now; and Ellen listlessly begins to set the table for tea without troubling to get a table-cloth. A knock is heard at the door. She opens it.*

Brian Connor. Is Mrs. Dempsey in?

Ellen (peering, and trying to make out who it is). Yes, won't you come inside?

Brian (coming in). It's a bad, bitter night, ma'am —

Ellen (recognizing him). Why, *Brian*! is it yourself?

Brian. What—what—Ellen! Are you Ellen? I declare I never knew you. How are you? (*Shaking hands.*)

Ellen (her voice trembling a little). Indeed, *Brian*, I'd know you anywhere, only when you stood in the dark I was puzzled for a minute; you haven't changed a bit since I saw you last. Come in to the fire, an' take off your coat, an' have a cup of tea—the kettle's just boiling.

Brian (taking off his coat, and looking at Ellen and the condition of the room with wondering eyes). Thanks, it's bitter cold out.

Ellen. Ah, sure, I'm ashamed to have you come

in on me an' the place in such a mess ; but we've a couple of sheep sick, an' a new calf, an' what with one thing an' another, I'm run off me feet, an' have no time for cleaning the house. Sit down, now (*dusting a chair*) ; an' tell me all about yourself an' how you're getting on.

Brian (sitting down). I'd rather hear about you.

Ellen (hastily). Ah, don't mind me. I suppose you're a very famous man up in Dublin now ?

Brian. Oh, I'm getting along all right. I'm writing books now, Ellen—novels ! But I'll tell you about that later. What I want to know is ——

Ellen. I'm very glad to hear it. Maybe—maybe some day you'd show me some of the books you've written ?

Brian. Of course I will. Only you said I was not to write to you or try to see you for seven years ; and the seven years are up this week, Ellen, and as soon as ever I could I came down.

Ellen (with a pang of recollection). Seven years ! How fast the time goes. Seven years ! Where are you living ?

Brian. In Rathgar. But I didn't come here to talk about myself and my doings. I——

Ellen. You've got married, I suppose ?

Brian. No ; I never married. You may be sure, Ellen, there was no one better pleased at your success than I was. When I pass that grand shop in Dublin and see "Ballygurteen Produce Depôt" painted over the door, why, I feel as proud as if I'd a hand in it myself ! We're all proud of you in Dublin, Ellen. The Erin Club sent a message down by me congratulating you, and hoping your success would continue.

Ellen (with her back to him). It's—it's very kind of them.

Brian (cheerfully). And I hear you're about starting another shop in London now. That's splendid, Ellen. [*Ellen says nothing.*]

Brian. But besides coming to see you, Ellen, I want to get a bit of copy for my next book. I thought I'd put you into it in a kind of way. I mean I'd make the heroine a woman who had devoted her life to raising the status of the Irish farmer. I'd draw a picture of the farm before she came into it, the waste, the dirt, the extravagance, you know: and then I'd show how she changed all that; how she economized, and plotted, and planned, and worked in the most scientific way till her husband's farm was the model farm all the country through; how the beasts fetched the best prices at the fairs and won prizes at the cattle shows; how the fields yielded record crops—oh! you know what I mean; you've proved it all: but I want to see it for myself, and I want you to tell me all—how it came about. [*Ellen is silent.*]

Brian (enthusiastically; too full of his subject to notice Ellen's silence). Don't you think it would make a splendid book? A grand optimistic book that, if it had the luck to fall into the hands of some girl that was going to the States, might keep her at home maybe, to do what you have done. That would be splendid, wouldn't it?

Ellen (dully). It would be—splendid.

Brian. I mean to make my book a sort of gospel, a message of hope to Ireland. It's a huge theme, and will mean a lot of hard work; but you'll help me—won't you, Ellen?—by telling me all that happened in your case. I want to be able to say if the book is said to be absurdly optimistic—"Well, I *know* a woman who has done what the woman in my book did," do you see?

[*Ellen tries to speak and fails.*]

Brian. You'll help me, won't you? (*Waits for her to speak, and, when she does not, adds anxiously.*) What's the matter, Ellen? I haven't vexed you, have I?

Ellen (sitting down at the table). No; oh, no. You'll be in Ballygurteen for a couple of days, will you?

Brian. Yes, till the end of the week anyhow—just as long as it takes me to collect the facts. But why——

Ellen. An' you'll come up here by daylight, an' you'll see for yourself, and the neighbours 'll talk. (*To herself.*) Then there's little use in hiding it.

Brian. What are you saying about hiding?

Ellen (sadly). I'm saying if you put me an' my life into a book, it's a very different thing you'll write. 'Tisn't success an' prizes an' the top price at fairs you'll have to tell of; but it's—it's—(*her voice breaks; she leans her head on her hand*).

Brian. What! what do you mean, Ellen? (*The dirty room and the prematurely old woman suddenly assume a significance*). Surely—surely—you don't mean to tell me that—that—you've—

Ellen. Yes, Brian; I've failed, after all my grand talk an' my plans; I'm—I'm—the farm (*begins to cry softly*)——

Brian (terribly shocked, and trying to soothe her). Ellen, Ellen! Don't cry; tell me what's happened. We used to be good friends in the old days. Ellen, don't cry. Ellen, tell me——

Ellen (pulling herself together after a moment). Yes, I'll tell you. You heard the beginning, an' you've a right to hear the end; it's a lonely an' a sad woman I am to-night, Brian Connor, an'

whether I've meself to thank for it or not, God only knows.

Brian (wrathfully). I suppose your—your husband——

Ellen. Tom is out seeing after the calves. I've brought him sorrow an' disgrace an'——

Brian. What nonsense, Ellen! *You* bring disgrace! What nonsense!

Ellen (quietly). 'Tis quite true. Let me tell me tale, an' have done with it; 'tis only a short story, for all it's a sad one.

Brian. 'Twill be queer if I can't find a remedy for any sorrow of yours, Ellen. But go on; tell me all that happened.

Ellen. Well, when you saw me last you know the fine talk I had; how Knockrobin farm was to be a model to the neighbourhood; how Tom was to be known east an' west as the smartest an' most up-to-date farmer; an' how—thanks to my example—Ballygurteen would be known all over Ireland——

Brian. But so it is, Ellen.

Ellen. Yes; but I've had no hand in its success. After I married Tom Dempsey, I worked very hard getting the farmers to join in a society, an' getting down inspectors an' instructors an' all that sort of thing. You know what's come of it; you know how thriving an' contented the people are round here; how they're sending out to America for the boys and girls to come home an' help in the work; how they're beginning to do the same in other places. It's been a great success. There's only been one failure.

Brian (intently). Yes?

Ellen. An' that's meself.

Brian. Ellen!

Ellen (simply). I don't know how it came about.

At first we began very well an' as successful as any of them—I was so proud an' happy—an' then things began to go wrong. The hens all died the year after I was married ; an' I've never been able to get them to do with me since. 'Twas the same with the calves. Tom never lost them only one now an' again ; but since I married him, an' he began to feed them the way the books say they should be fed 't isn't the ones that die we count, but the ones we manage to rear. I've nothing to do with the Society now ; it's only laughing at me they were, going down an' directing them, an' Knockrobin farm the only failure of them all. D'you know what Tom's saying now ? that there's a curse on me an' on everything I put me hand to, an' I'm thinking it's right he is, an' that there *is* a curse ; for surely since the day I entered this farm there's been nothing but black misfortune an' disgrace. We've lost half the sheep this winter when not another neighbour for miles round has one even sick. (*With sudden despair.*) God help me, Brian ! What am I to do at all ?

Brian. This is dreadful, Ellen ; but don't be talking about your bringing a curse—that's nonsense. Whosever fault it is, it isn't yours. I'm sure your husband didn't give you a free hand with the farm.

Ellen. No. I must say Tom let me do just what I pleased—at first ; he didn't hinder nor prevent me at all. 'Twasn't his fault anyway. Lately he's beginning to go back to his old ways, an' how can I say a word to him ? The new ways weren't such a success.

Brian. Keep up a stout heart, Ellen. You've had a spell of bad luck ; but it will mend. I'm sure it will.

Ellen (drearily). No, that it won't. I've a long,

dark road to travel, an' walk it I must to the bitter end; an' it's lonely I'll be before I reach the end of it.

[*Silence for a moment.*]

Brian. Have--have you no children, Ellen?

Ellen. I had two sons—two fine strong boys. One was turning four, an' the other just two; an' they caught the fever an' died within a week.—(*Simply.*) I thought maybe I'd die meself that time; but I know now that I've a long way to travel before that day comes.

Brian (his voice breaking). My poor Ellen!-- But your husband—Tom—he'll stand by you on the dark road?

Ellen (shaking her head slowly). Tom was a hard man the day I married him; an' it's a harder man he is this day, an' it's queer if he wouldn't be hard with his two sons dead, an' the farm the way it is. So that's the story you must write, Brian, if it's my story you want to write; you must write of a woman who brought with her a great, black curse, an' black disgrace, an' shame. Yet (*her voice softening*), don't write that story. For if it is a curse that's on me, how can I help it? an' I tell you that if I was a girl again, I'd do the same as I done before. For it's the right road I took that day, Brian Connor, for all it led me to this; an' it's the road I'd take again, an' it's the right road. Write that story, Brian, that you were saying you'd write, an' make it about a woman who done what I did, an' who made a success of it. Put down how she improved everything, how everything went well with her—as it should have gone with me; an' don't ever, ever let on a word about a woman who failed.

Brian. But Ellen, what are you going to do? Why don't you sell the farm and go to the States?

Ellen. Ah, no; me heart would be broken

altogether away from Ireland. Besides, the farm isn't that bad. If we could only keep on, maybe things would pick up a bit.

[Goes to the fire, and makes the tea.]

Brian. I wish I could help you. I wish I could do something. I never dreamed of such a thing;—and when I used to see the grand shop—I can't understand it, Ellen; if everyone had failed, it would be different, but that you alone——

Ellen. Yes, 'tis queer.

Brian. I can't understand it. Ellen, do you remember, long ago at the club, poor Blake and his wild notions about natural mates——

Ellen (with interest). Yes?

Brian. And how—if you rejected your mate——

Ellen. There'd be a curse! And you mean that you—and I—(*starting to her feet*). Oh, Brian, that's—that's nonsense.

Brian. Yes, of course it's nonsense. Those things are all nonsense. It's only chance that you have failed where the others have succeeded (*following her to the fire, and laying his hand gently on her arm*). That should be some comfort to you, Ellen, to think that though you yourself may have failed, you have helped others to succeed.

Ellen (sitting down again). I suppose it should. But it seems only bitterer that I who was the beginner an' planner of the whole thing should have failed. I do be thinking of all that, Brian, in the long, lonely evenings, when never a step comes up to the door, an' Tom's asleep by the fire, an'—an' the little cold, empty cradle.

Brian (desperately trying to think of some way to help her). I'll tell you what I'll do, Ellen; I'll—I'll send you down a lot of books from Dublin, and you can be reading them in the winter evenings, and you won't be thinking sad thoughts.

Ellen. Thank you, kindly, Brian; but I think I'm done with books. After the children died I got some; but it vexed himself, an' he threw them into the fire. (*Hastily, seeing Brian start.*) I'm better without reading, I think. Where's the use in talking about it all? Tell me about yourself, Brian; maybe it's a better story.

Brian. There's not much to tell. Do you know that after I went back to Dublin—after seeing you—I chucked that appointment I had with the English firm? Your example made me do that, Ellen.

Ellen. I hope it led you to no ill.

Brian. Indeed it didn't. It was the turn of the tide for me. I got on with an Irish newspaper; and since then I've devoted myself altogether to Ireland and things Irish.

Ellen (with faint interest). I'm glad to hear that.

Brian. And are you as keen on Ireland as ever?—but of course you are.

Ellen (wearily). I don't know. I never think of those things now, Brian; I haven't time. I'm worn out with working; and you must have great leisure to think (*getting up from the table*). Here's himself now. Spake civil to him, Brian, for it's a disappointed man he is this day.

[*Enter Tom Dempsey. He looks surlily at Brian.*]

Ellen. This is Mr. Brian Connor, Tom. He knew me when I was in Dublin. He was passing the road, an' he looked in to see how I was getting on. Sit down now an' have your tea.

Brian. How d'ye do, Mr. Dempsey (*offering his hand, which Tom takes rather unwillingly*)?

Tom. Good evening. (*To Ellen.*) I heard those chickens of yours peepin' round in the yard (*goes*

into the room on the left, and leaves his hat and stick there).

Ellen. D'ye say so? They must have got away from the hen. I'll look after them as soon as I give you your tea.

[*Tom comes back and sits down at the table. Ellen puts some bread on the table and pours out two cups of tea.*]

Ellen. Now, Brian, I'm thinking you won't be sorry to drink that after the cold walk you had up from the village.

Brian. Thank you.

Ellen. Now be going on with your tea, an' I'll just step outside and have a look at my chickens. It's perishing they are, I'm afraid.

[*Wraps a shawl round her and goes out.*]

Brian (*trying to be pleasant*). It's been a hard, cold winter, hasn't it?

Tom (*gruffly*). Ay.

Brian. But I hope it will soon take a turn for the better. I was frozen coming down in the train to-day. (*Pauses for Tom to speak.*)

Brian. This is fine hot tea you have, and grand rich milk. I don't think we have anything like this where I come from.

Tom. You're from Dublin, aren't you?

Brian. Yes; I live in Dublin. I wish I could live in the country, like you do, but——

Tom. I don't think much of Dublin. Herself spent a year or two there.

Brian. I know. It was there that I met your wife. [A pause.]

Tom. No; I don't think a dale of Dublin. I've never been there, but I've a notion that if you live there for a bit, you come away with your head stuffed full of a lot of silly notions.

Brian (smiling). Indeed. What makes you think that?

Tom. It isn't thinking—it's knowing. Those years herself spent in Dublin were the ruination of her life. Before she went up, she was a fine, strong, country girl, with no notions at all, content to do as her mother an' her grandmother had done before her.

Brian. Yes. And after this Dublin visit?

Tom. She came back with her head packed full of a lot of damned rubbish about claning an' scrubbing an' feeding the hins with patent foods, an' draining the land—an'—an' any amount of cursed notions.

Brian. I see. But you know farming now-a-days is a very different thing to what it was in our fathers' time. I'm sure it's a difficult thing getting out of the old ways; but the new are the best ways, and the ways to make farming pay.

Tom. Are you a farmer?

Brian. No; but——

Tom. Well, I am; an' I know what I'm talking about. An' let me tell you that all this new talk, an' these inspectors an' instructors are a lot of blasted rubbish. (*Striking the table.*) 'Tis easy for them an' you to be talking of milk an' butter—when you get them at a shop. Doesn't the man who buys the cows, an' feeds them, an' milks them, know more what he's talking about?

Brian. Certainly. I don't pretend to instruct you. But don't blame up-to-date notions because you have not found them very successful in your case. Your wife tells me ——

Tom (bitterly). Ah, don't talk to me of her! Believe me, 'tis she an' her notions have been the ruin of this farm.

Brian (trying hard to keep down his rising anger). Oh, I'm sure that's not the case.

Tom. It's true. She was full of her plans for this thing an' that when I married her seven years ago, an' I allowed her to lead me by the nose, an' see where she's brought me! Oh! she fooled me nicely with her claneness an' her notions. She brought this farm to a fine state, as you'd see yourself if it wasn't the black night; but I'm damned if I'll be led by her any more.

Brian. She meant it for the best anyhow. And look how well these notions—as you call them—have succeeded with the other farmers.

Tom (obstinately). I don't know about them. I only know it's brought this farm to black ruin—an' if the neighbours *have* made it pay, doesn't that show it's she an' the curse she puts on everything are the ruination of me?

Brian (holding himself in). Nonsense. She's had trouble enough of her own with her children dead.

Tom (looking at him closely). It's a lot she's been telling you. An' what sort is a woman who couldn't rear a couple of children?

[*Brian is afraid to trust himself to speak.*]

Tom. She's out now, looking after some chickens, an' who ever heard of rearing chickens in the middle of the cold winter? She's lost half of them already, an' it won't be long before the others go too. She's the fine manager!

Brian (hotly). You'd be badly off without her.

Tom. I would—would I? (*Laughs*). 'Twas a good thriving farm I had before the day she stepped into it, bringing a bloody curse with her. Oh, she's a black divil. (*With venom.*)

Brian (starting up). You're not to say such things of her. I won't stand it!

Tom. An' what call have you to be objecting ?

Brian. I won't stay here and listen to her being abused.

Tom. An' why not ?

Brian. Because I know her well, better than you do, though you *are* her husband—God help her !

Tom (slowly). Oh ! I'm thinkin' it's very well you knew her when she was in Dublin.

Brian. What do you mean ?

Tom (carelessly). Oh, we're ignorant down here in the country, but we're not altogether fools, an' we know what goes on in the cities. An' I'm thinkin' you knew her very well. (*With a leer.*)

Brian. You'll take back those words !

Tom. I won't.

Brian. Then I'll choke them out of you !

[*Springs on him, and grips him by the throat. They struggle across the room ; and Brian forces Tom into a chair. The door opens, and Ellen enters. Seeing the struggling figures she rushes forward.*]

Ellen. Brian ! for God's sake, let him go ! D'you want to be hung ? Let him go, I tell you.

[*Drags him off, and keeps him away. Tom lies half-choked and speechless across the chair.*]

Brian. Let me at him, Ellen ; let me kill him ; if you only knew the vile things he said.

Ellen. Be quiet, can't you ? I won't have any murder done here.

Brian. I don't care if I hang for it. Let me at him, and choke the words in his throat.

Ellen. You'll do no such thing.

Brian. Let me go, Ellen !

Ellen. I won't. Didn't I tell you to speak quiet to him ?

Tom (gasping). I'll have you up in court for this. You'd—you'd have had me choked in another—minute—if—if herself hadn't come in.

Brian. And sorry I am she did come in—you damned ruffian! Let me go, Ellen.

Ellen. Whisht, whisht!

Tom (rising). I'll go away down to the barracks now, an'—

Ellen. You'll do no such thing. What good is it making a fuss about it? (*To Brian*). Go away now quietly, an' I'll pacify him.

Brian. I will not go away until I've settled my business with this man. You don't know, Ellen—you—

Ellen. I know that I'm not going to have any murder done here. Be quiet now, can't you, and *please* go away.

Brian. If I go, I'll take you with me, Ellen, for I'll not leave you another night with that blackguard. Put your shawl around you and come along. [*Handing her her shawl.*]

Ellen (in surprise). What?

Brian. I'm asking you to come away with me, Ellen; to come away out of this grey, sordid life you've been living; to come away into a world that's peopled with men and women who think, and not with a set of *clods*! You've tried this life, and you see what the result has been. Come away with me now and taste a fuller, richer life.

[*Ellen has moved away from him. She stands between the two men, looking at Brian. She makes no movement.*]

Tom (rising from his chair threateningly). Faith, if she leaves this house to-night, there'll be black murder done before the morning.

Brian. Come on, Ellen, no matter what he says

or does. I'm not going to leave you in the hell of a life you've been in; you're made for a finer, freer life. Come on!

[He puts on his coat. Ellen makes a hesitating movement.]

Brian. You can trust me, Ellen, can't you? You're not afraid, are you?

Ellen. No. I'm not afraid of you, nor (*with scorn*) of him. An'— an'—I *will* go with you this night, Brian Connor; for God knows my life has been a hell.

Tom. What are you saying?

[Makes as though he would strike her.]

Ellen (*fearlessly facing him*). You'd better let me go quietly, an' don't be talking of murder or the like, or maybe 'tis yourself will get killed. He's not afraid of you, an' *I'm* not afraid of you; an' maybe when I'm gone the curse will go with me, an' you'll have a fine farm again—*maybe!*—I'm coming, Brian.

[Tom, with a desperate look, and muttering "Where's me stick?" goes into the inner room.]

Brian (*buttoning his coat*). You'll never regret this, Ellen. (*Goes to the door and opens it*). Are you ready?

Ellen (*fumbling with her shawl and delaying*). Yes, yes; I'm—I'm nearly ready.

[Brian waits at the door, peering out to see what the night is like. Ellen looks round the room, takes a step towards the door, and hesitates.]

Brian (*looking round*). Come on, Ellen.

[Ellen moves a few steps to the door. She hesitates again.]

Ellen. I—I— (*crying out loudly*). Brian, what are you making me do at all?

Brian. I'm taking you out of a hell of a life.

Ellen (*shrinking from the open door*). I can't; I can't.

Brian (*impatiently*). Nonsense, come on! We'll miss the train if you don't hurry.

[*Tom appears in the doorway of the inner room with his stick in his hand and stands watching them unnoticed.*]

Ellen. I can't!

Brian. Come on!

Ellen. No, no.

Brian (*coming back, and speaking very earnestly*). Ellen, do you remember the day I was here seven years ago? You had to choose then between this man and me. You chose him, and see what happened. You're at the cross-roads again, Ellen; and for God's sake don't make the same mistake: You chose the wrong road then; choose the right one now.

Ellen. The right road? Out into the night with you? (*Abandons herself to him with sudden tenderness, but draws away after a moment.*) No, Brian; that's not my road at all.

[*Quietly takes off her shawl.*]

Brian. Ellen, think,—think of—

Ellen. Think of the mistake I made before, if it was a mistake? Well, whether 'twas a mistake or not, I know well that 'twould be wrong an' a sin to go away with you now. I've a hard, dark road to travel, but foot it I must to the bitter end.

Brian (*in despair*). Ellen! why?

Ellen (*sitting sadly at the table*). Where's all me fine talk about Ireland if I go off with you? Me

life and me duty's here with this man. Go off with yourself now, an' you're not to come back in seven years' time—no, nor in seventy.

Brian (desperately). You're not going to ruin your life for Ireland, for the sake of an impossible ideal?

Ellen. Maybe I am. If I brought failure an' disgrace to this farm an' this man, I won't have it be said that I brought him *that* disgrace. So go off, now; only (*her voice softening*) don't think I'm altogether vexed with you, Brian, for I am not; only your road an' mine must never again cross—never in the whole wide world.

Brian (after a moment's pause). Is this your last word?

Ellen. Yes.

Brian (with an effort). Then—then—goodbye—once and for all! [*Goes out.*]

Tom (coming slowly down the room). Oh! you're a clever woman!

Ellen (in a low voice). Don't be hard on me now, an' I after saving you from being murdered.

Tom. Was it me you saved or was it the young man? When you pulled him off me, did you save me or was it him you saved from being hung? Tell me that, Ellen McCarthy.

[*Silence.*]

Tom. Ah! 'tis aisy seen.

[*Puts his hat on, and goes to the door, and takes the key out of the lock.*]

Ellen (looking round). What are you doing? (*Frightened.*) What are you doing?

Tom. I'll tell you what I'm doing. I'm locking the door the way you won't go out after that young man; an' I'm going to step down to the village now for a sup of drink. An' then—I'm

coming back; an', by God, I'll make you pay for this night's work, Ellen McCarthy, till you'd wish you were dead—for the black curse you brought on this farm, an' for the liking you have to the young man.

[Goes out. Ellen remains sitting at the table, staring in front of her with sad, hopeless eyes. The key turns in the lock with a sound of dreadful finality.]

CURTAIN.



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<i>Sydney Doyle,</i>	.	.	.	ERIC GORMAN.
<i>Brian Connor,</i>	.	.	.	FRED O'DONOVAN.
<i>Henry Blake,</i>	.	.	.	J. A. O'ROURKE.
<i>Ellen McCarthy,</i>	.	.	.	SARA ALLGOOD.

PLAY.

<i>Ellen McCarthy,</i>	.	.	.	SARA ALLGOOD.
<i>Mrs. McCarthy,</i>	.	.	.	MAIRE O'NEILL.
<i>Mrs. Desmond,</i>	.	.	.	EILEEN O'DOHERTY.
<i>Mike Dempsey,</i>	.	.	.	J. M. KERRIGAN.
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